United Nations E/2005/34 (Part I)/Add.1-E/ICEF/2005/5 (Part I)/Add.1

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
25 February 2005

Original: English

Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its first regular session of 2005

(17-20 and 24 January 2005)

Addendum*

* The present report, submitted as an addendum to the report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on its first regular session of 2005, is a summary of the discussions that took place during the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme (WFP), held on 20 and 24 January 2005. The text was prepared jointly by the secretariats of the funds and programmes.

05-25025 (E) 160305

I. Children and women affected by HIV/AIDS

1. Following opening comments by the President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UNICEF Executive Director, the presentations addressed the priority issues of children and women made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS; provided examples of joint action in the United Nations system; and highlighted priority challenges for the United Nations system in strengthening the responses of individual agencies and joint responses.

2. Speakers noted the progress that has been made for children and women affected by HIV/AIDS, including the increasing number of international frameworks for global and United Nations action, internationally endorsed targets, norms and standards as well as increasing evidence of joint action across the United Nations system. Examples included school food and nutrition programmes, the rapid assessment, analysis and action planning in 17 sub-Saharan African countries and increasing inclusion in poverty reduction strategy papers of a role for children and young people affected by HIV/AIDS.

3. But as the presentations and subsequent interventions made clear, there has not been sufficient action to address the rights of children and women made vulnerable by the pandemic. Agencies need to do more individually and together through such concrete opportunities as: global initiatives such as the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS and the Global Partners Forum on Orphans and Vulnerable Children; efforts to strengthen the United Nations response to HIV/AIDS; and United Nations reform and the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development.

4. The important links between the issues of affected children and women were highlighted, emphasizing that vulnerable children, in particular, need access to sexual and reproductive health and rights in order to break the cycle of HIV transmission. Primary prevention and keeping parents alive are two of the most important strategies for reducing the vulnerability of children affected by HIV/AIDS. Tackling gender-based violence must be a key component of prevention strategies.

5. Speakers said that as a priority, the concerns of women and children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS must be integrated into national development instruments such as poverty reduction strategy papers and national HIV/AIDS plans. But at the same time, attention and support at the community level must increase, with an eye to strengthening community capacities to cope with the impacts of the pandemic. This included channelling resources to communities and tracking resources to ensure accountability.

6. It was also stressed that coordination of the global, regional and national responses to HIV/AIDS remains an immense challenge. The "three ones" principle provides a framework for addressing this, with an important emphasis on national ownership. This now needs to move beyond slogans to meaningful action on the ground. The United Nations system must promote and support action that is rights-based, gender-sensitive and nationally owned.

II. Gender

7. Following introductory remarks by the President of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Board, the Executive Director of UNFPA made a presentation on the experiences and issues of gender mainstreaming. She underlined several examples of good inter-agency collaboration and also pointed out the key challenges of insufficient resources for gender mainstreaming policies; the varying expertise of staff on gender issues; the limitations of gender-disaggregated data systems; and inadequate tracking, monitoring and accountability at significant levels.

8. The Director of the Women, Gender and Development Department of the African Union gave examples of institutionalized commitment to gender mainstreaming in the African Union, but also pointed out the weak ownership of the gender equality agenda by decision makers, who often do not recognize that addressing gender issues and gender mainstreaming was a critical strategy for sustainable development.

9. In the ensuing discussion, members of the Executive Boards made a number of recommendations. For future joint meetings, it was suggested that there be one joint inter-agency document on gender, outlining common strategies and responsibilities, specific targets and accountabilities for gender mainstreaming in poverty reduction strategy papers, the common country assessment (CCA)/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) processes and government policies, as well as advocacy for linking the Millennium Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The document should include information on the agencies' resources, accountability and gender expertise. Targets and results should be expressed both qualitatively and quantitatively.

10. Speakers said that the agencies must work together on how to measure success in gender mainstreaming and reducing inequalities between women and men, and on how to help countries to establish accountability systems in mainstreaming gender issues. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank should be more involved in gender mainstreaming strategies since poverty reduction strategy papers are key development frameworks. In addition, donors should increase their financial support to gender mainstreaming efforts. Simultaneously, agencies should devote institutional core resources to gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment, and not rely on extrabudgetary funding for this.

11. It was suggested that community intervention must be a part of gender mainstreaming strategies to build community ownership and accelerate behavioural and policy change on gender issues. Gender mainstreaming must be accompanied by specific attention to women's empowerment. For their part, agencies need to build institutional accountability, develop capacities at all levels of staff, perform gender audits and gender-responsive budgeting and develop base-line data and means for tracking change. The concept of gender mainstreaming and tactics to achieve it must be clarified.

III. Transition from relief to development

12. The President of the Executive Board of the World Food Programme (WFP) introduced the item, stressing that the United Nations can play a potentially important role in transition. The representative of WFP spoke about the progress to date of the Joint Working Group, saying that United Nations Development Group (UNDG) agencies were working together in post-natural disaster transitions (as in the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster), as well as in post-conflict transitions.

13. The Executive Director of UNICEF said that the work of the UNDG Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs on transitions had a positive impact on the ability of the United Nations to position itself for transition. The responsiveness of a strong resident coordinator system — combined with early support from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs — in the tsunami-affected countries was a positive example of progress. The Humanitarian Coordinator for Haiti presented a concrete example of how transition programming, following a natural disaster, is being tackled in the field. He reviewed the interplay of different United Nations structures in responding to the devastating floods of 2004, specifically the experience of collaborating with the United Nations peacekeeping mission there.

14. Several delegations raised the importance of advancing the development of creative options for financing for transitions by the United Nations and the international financial institutions. The UNDG office was encouraged to extend its concrete partnerships to the regional development banks in addition to its ongoing cooperation with the World Bank. A number of delegations stressed the need to position transitioning programming firmly within government-owned processes and plans. The importance of capacity-building in this regard, admittedly difficult in many post-conflict situations, was stressed. Several delegations mentioned that only with a longer-term outlook and longer-term assistance could the United Nations help address the structural causes that have led to conflict.

15. There was general agreement that the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Assistance Working Group on Transition Issues should expand its work to include post-natural disaster transitions. Delegations expressed support for plans of the UNDG office to reinforce its support to country teams in this regard. Several delegations suggested that the lessons learned from tsunami recovery programming would be a useful starting point and potentially a good issue to discuss at a future joint meeting of the Executive Boards. Delegations approved of the Working Group's intentions to follow ongoing discussions on United Nations reform, including the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. Several speakers said that non-governmental and informal discussions on reform should be viewed with caution and that the agencies were guided in the area of transition primarily by resolutions of the Economic and Social Council.

16. The pivotal role of women in peacebuilding and rehabilitation processes was raised, with the particular example of El Salvador cited. Noting that gender had been identified by the Working Group as an area for further work, speakers encouraged the UNDG office to pursue this.

17. Concluding the discussion, the President of the WFP Executive Board stressed the need to clarify and agree on a common understanding of the word "transition"; the important role of UNDG in planning and implementing activities for transition

(both post-conflict and post-natural disaster) and the need for the international financial institutions to fully engage with the UNDG agencies; the importance of the continuing direct needs of vulnerable populations in transition situations and the need for post-conflict needs assessments to reflect them; the need to ensure a humanitarian "space" in all United Nations missions; the need to examine the costs of coordination in transition situations; and the need for the Working Group to continue working on practical, field-based support rather than waiting for the conclusions of United Nations reform processes.

IV. Simplification and harmonization

18. The Associate Administrator of UNDP described the status of simplification and harmonization in light of General Assembly resolution 59/250 on the triennial comprehensive policy review. His intervention preceded remarks by the 2004 Chairmen of the UNDG Programme and Management Groups on progress since the last joint meeting of the Executive Boards. The regional and country-level perspectives, highlighted by the Director, Africa Division, UNFPA; the Secretary, Economic Affairs Division, Government of Pakistan; and the Resident Coordinator, Pakistan, focused on regional best practices and country-level implementation initiatives based on national ownership.

19. Expressing their commitment to United Nations reform and underlining the significance of the General Assembly resolution, delegations highlighted that the United Nations system was under scrutiny at the country level, and viewed the triennial comprehensive policy review as a call for action to work more effectively and efficiently. They pointed to the need to look beyond internal procedures in order to align with other agencies and stakeholders at the country level. They urged UNDG to seek greater involvement of United Nations organizations and expand collaboration with the international financial institutions.

20. The absence of clear targets and timelines for implementing the recommendations of the triennial comprehensive policy review during the period 2005-2007 raised concerns. Delegations looked forward to a timetable and harmonization plan at the Economic and Social Council organizational session for 2005 and stressed the importance of the March 2005 meeting of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. They noted potential joint programming costs and overlapping agency roles, which could blur accountability and transparency. Several delegations questioned the desirability of pooling funding mechanisms for joint programming.

21. In general, delegations encouraged UNDG to follow up on UNDAF evaluations, establish joint guidelines on cost recovery, clarify accountability of pooling arrangements, issue practical country team guidelines on capacity-building and technical cooperation, strengthen the inter-agency focus on gender, intensify efforts to harmonize CCA/UNDAF processes with national priorities and expand pilot initiatives for joint offices to other countries. They underlined the value of joint needs assessments, common tools for crisis/post-crisis situations, integrated databases and expanding regional coordination to avoid duplication and resource waste.

22. In response, UNDG representatives clarified that an implementation plan for 2005-2007 was being developed with clear, concrete targets and a timeline for

implementation of the triennial comprehensive policy review recommendations, in accordance with human and financial resource requirements. They noted that lessons learned from joint programming and previous UNDAF exercises would be collected to improve joint programming guidelines, originally developed in accordance with the first recommendations of the triennial comprehensive policy review.

23. Underlining the importance of national ownership and the alignment of poverty reduction strategy papers with the Millennium Development Goals, the secretariats stressed that the CCA/UNDAF processes were systematically carried out based on national priorities laid out in poverty reduction strategy papers or similar strategies and in line with the commitments of the Millennium Declaration. *DevInfo* had been developed to assist programme countries in monitoring progress at the national level.

24. Regarding cost benefits, experience had proven that common premises, common services and joint offices had resulted in lower transaction costs and allowed greater development impact.